

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 300548Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3086

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 7642

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MNUC KS

SUBJECT: ROK NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING PLANT

REF: STATE 226011

BEGIN SUMMARY: I HAVE NOW COMPLETED SECOND ROUND OF APPROACHES TO ROKG ON FRENCH NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING LABORATORY. OVER PAST FEW DAYS, I HAVE PRESENTED BOTH NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ASPECTS OF US POSITION TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER, AND MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MOST). INITIAL RESPONSES WERE UNEQUIVOCALLY NEGATIVE, INDICATING UNIFORM AND FIRM DETERMINATION TO GO AHEAD WITH PURCHASE OF FRENCH REPROCESSING PLANT AND DISAPPOINTMENT AT UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT PREVIOUSLY OFFERED RATIONALE FOR ROK POSITION. WE ARE NOW AWAITING CONSIDERED RESPONSE TO OUR APPROACH. END SUMMARY.

1. ON SEPT. 25, I MET WITH ACTING FONMIN LHO SHIN YONG WHO ACCOMPANIED BY DR. YOON YUNG KU (PRESIDENT KAERI), AND FOLLOWED-UP WITH PRIVATE MEETING SEPT 26 WITH DEPPRIMIN NAM DUCK WOO AND SEPT 29 WITH DR. CHOE HYONG SOP (MOST).

2. I BASED PRESENTATION AT ALL THREE MEETINGS CLOSELY ON REFTEL GUIDANCE. I EMPHASIZED FOLLOWING POINTS, GEARED TO ANTICI-

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PATED ROK SENSITIVITIES, BUT COVERED ALL POINTS IN REFTEL:

A. ROKG EXPLANATION OF REPROCESSING FACILITY APPRECIATED AND CAREFULLY EXAMINED, BUT USG REMAINS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PURCHASING FRENCH FACILITY AND URGES ROK TO CANCEL PURCHASE.

B. US OPPOSITION TO NATIONAL APPROACH ON NUCLEAR REPROCESSING IS CONSISTENT POLICY AND NON-DISCRIMINATORY AGAINST ROKG; US STRONGLY SUPPORTS ALTERNATIVE OF MULTINATIONAL REPROCESSING. I PLACED PARTICULAR STRESS ON SECRETARY'S SEPT 22 UNGA STATEMENT TO DEMONSTRATE WE WERE NOT SINGLING OUT ROK.

C. DESTABILIZING INFLUENCE ON SECURITY SITUATION OF KOREA WAS SET FORTH. I POINTED OUT THAT, IRRESPECTIVE OF ROK INTENTIONS, PERCEPTION IN REGION OF ROK CAPABILITY TO SEPARATE PLUTONIUM COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT POLITICAL AND SECURITY RELATIONSHIPS INCLUDING OUR OWN.

D. QUESTIONABLE ABILITY TO OBTAIN CONGRESSIONAL AGREEMENT TO LOANS FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS WAS POINTED UP AS PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION.

E. MAJOR EMPHASIS PLACED UPON CONSTRUCTIVE CARROTS IN PACKAGE, PARTICULARLY SUPPORT FOR FUEL FABRICATION, SET FORTH IN REFTTEL, AND I URGED ROKG TO BALANCE THESE PROSPECTIVE ADVANTAGES TO ITS NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM AGAINST LOSS OF ONLY REPROCESSING ELEMENT IN FRENCH CONTRACT.

2. FINALLY, IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH BOTH LHO AND NAM, I EMPHASIZED POTENTIAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF KOREAN NATIONAL REPROCESSING ON BROADER US-KOREAN MUTUAL INTERESTS. I TOUCHED ONLY LIGHTLY ON RELATIVE SENSITIVITY OF KOREAN AND JAPANESE PROGRAMS, GIVEN FACT THAT KOREANS AWARE OF MUCH LARGER REPROCESSING PLANT PURCHASED BY JAPAN ALSO FROM FRANCE, GENERAL SENSITIVITY IN REGION TO POSSIBLE JAPANESE NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM AND JAPANESE FAILURE SO FAR TO RATIFY NPT. ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WERE REITERATED AGAIN.

3. REACTION OF ROKG SENIOR OFFICIALS WAS UNIFORMLY NEGATIVE. HIGHLIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL CONVERSATIONS SET FORTH BELOW, BUT
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KEY POINTS ARE SUMMARIZED ALONG FOLLOWING LINES:

A. ROKG HAD ANTICIPATED US WOULD AGREE TO PURCHASE OF FRENCH REPROCESSING FACILITY ONCE FULL EXPLANATION PROVIDED.

B. ROKG UNABLE UNDERSTAND US OBJECTIONS SINCE FACILITY ONLY FOR TRAINING, FULL SAFEGUARDS PROVIDED UNDER IAEA, AND ADDITIONALLY COMPLETE US INSPECTION OFFERED. AS LHO PUT IT, ROKG INVITED

USG NOT ONLY INTO "PARLOR" BUT INTO "BEDROOM."

C. ROKG COULD NOT CANCEL CONTRACT WITH FRENCH AT THIS LATE STAGE.
I REBUTTED THIS, REFERRING TO OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH FRENCH.

D. ROKG AGREES WITH AND HAS BEEN PROMOTING MULTINATIONAL APPROACH
AND SEES FRENCH LABORATORY AS NECESSARY TRAINING GROUND FOR ROK
SCIENTISTS TO PARTICIPATE MEANINGFULLY IN MULTINATIONAL VENTURE.

E. ROKG ONLY PLANS TO OPERATE EXPERIMENTAL PLANT 30-40 DAYS PER
YEAR AND THEREFORE PLUTONIUM PRODUCTION WOULD BE MINIMAL.

F. ROKG EXPECTS ADMINISTRATION TO PERSUADE CONGRESS ON THIS
BASIS TO GO ALONG IN SUPPORT OF KOREAN NUCLEAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT.

G. ROKG RESENTS DISCRIMINATION VIS-A-VIS JAPAN AND BRAZIL.
WE MADE MAJOR EFFORT TO REBUT THIS POINT, POINTING OUT STRONG
PROTEST AGAINST BRAZILIAN DEAL.

H. ROKG HAS NO INTENTION OF USING PLUTONIUM FOR WEAPONS PUR-
POSES AND RESENTS US LACK OF CONFIDENCE AND TRUST.

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 7642

EXDIS

I. ROKG DECISION PURCHASE FRENCH PLANT IS FINAL AND WAS RE-
CONFIRMED BY PRESIDENT PARK PRIOR TO RESPONSE TO INITIAL US
APPROACH. ROKG PREPARED IF NECESSARY TO SACRIFICE KORI II

FINANCING. DETAILS ON PRESIDENT'S VIEW SET FORTH BELOW IN REPORT OF NAM CONVERSATION.

4. DPM NAM, IN CONTRAST TO MY LAST CONVERSATION WITH HIM, OFFERED NO REPEAT NO HINT OF ROKG WILLINGNESS TO CANCEL FRENCH REPROCESSING CONTRACT. HE RESPONDED TO MY APPROACH BY REITERATING THAT ROKG WAS NOT GOING TO USE FACILITY FOR WEAPONS MANUFACTURE AND BY EXPRESSING SURPRISE AT US POSITION GIVEN ROKG EXPLANATION AND SAFEGUARDS PROPOSED, INCLUDING US PRESENCE AT FACILITY. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, REPROCESSING FACILITY SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS "UNDER NATIONAL CONTROL." NAM ALSO REFERRED TO JAPANESE AND BRAZILIAN REPROCESSING FACILITIES, ASKING WHY KOREA SINGLED OUT.

5. AS DISCUSSION ENSUED, NAM THEN REVEALED INITIAL DECISION TO REJECT US APPROACH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT CABINET MEETING ATTENDED BY PRESIDENT PARK. WHILE MINISTER CHOI AND YOON WERE CRITICIZED FOR FAILING TO CONSULT SUFFICIENTLY WITH US BEFORE FRENCH CONTRACT SIGNED, PRESIDENT'S VIEW WAS THAT SAFEGUARDS OFFERED US WERE MORE THAN SUFFICIENT TO REASSURE US, AND KOREA

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HAD SOVEREIGN RIGHT UNDER NPT TO UNDERTAKE SAFEGUARDED RESEARCH REPROCESSING FACILITY. FURTHERMORE PRESIDENT, ACCORDING TO NAM, HAD STATED ROKG WOULD GIVE UP KORI II LOAN IF NECESSARY.

6. ACTING FONMIN LHO WAS EVEN MORE ADAMANT WHEN INSISTING WASHINGTON HAD NO REASON TO WORRY OR SUSPECT ROKG FOR DEVELOPING THIS "MINI-PROJECT." HE SAID FRENCH CONTRACT COULD NOT NOW BE ALTERED AND SITUATION HAD REACHED IMPASSE. HE URGED ADMINISTRATION PERSUADE CONGRESS TO GO ALONG WITH SUPPORT OF NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM BASED ON ROKG EXPLANATIONS. HE TOO REFERRED TO DIFFERENTIAL JAPAN AND BRAZIL TREATMENT. IT WAS ONLY AFTER FURTHER FURTHER PRESSURE THAT LHO AGREED, RATHER GRUDGINGLY, TO CONVEY US APPROACH TO HIS SUPERIORS. LHO CONFIRMED BLUE HOUSE STAFF ADVISED OF US POSITION.

7. IN MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR SEPT 29, CHOI (MOST) ENFORCED POINTS MADE BY NAM AND LHO. CHOI SAID:

(1) THAT HE HIMSELF WAS FIRST TO ADVOCATE REGIONAL APPROACH TO REPROCESSING, AND ROKG ONLY WENT TO FRENCH TO TRAIN THEMSELVES IN THIS AREA AFTER U.S. AND JAPANESE HAD REJECTED ROK REQUESTS FOR HELP SEVERAL YEARS AGO; AND

(2) THAT KOREA WAS NOW OFFERING TO OPEN UP ITS FACILITY COMPLETELY TO BILATERAL US INSPECTION AS WELL AS IAEA INSPECTION UNDER SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT. US REQUEST TO CANCEL FRENCH REPROCESSING CONTRACT DESPITE BACKGROUND AND KOREAN OPENNESS COULD ONLY MEAN

U.S. DID NOT "TRUST" ROKG. U.S. WAS KOREA'S BEST FRIEND BUT KOREA HAD TO BE ALLOWED TO TURN TO OTHERS FOR ASSISTANCE. HE REITERATED THAT IN INTEREST OF SAVING FOREIGN EXCHANGE, ROKG SOUGHT TO ACQUIRE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF FUEL CYCLE, SAFETY MANAGEMENT, REST OF LWR FUEL CYCLE, AND OTHER ENERGY R&D SUCH AS LMFBR AND FUSION. WHILE ATTRACTED TO US PACKAGE, CHOI REITERATED THAT REPROCESSING KNOWLEDGE IS ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN RESEARCH AND TRAINING PROGRAM. HE SAID DECISION TO DROP FRENCH PLANT NOW "POLITICAL." HE ALSO QUESTIONED US CONCLUSION THAT RESEARCH PLANT COULD PRODUCE ENOUGH PLUTONIUM TO BE MATTER OF CONCERN. TO UNDERLINE FURTHER ROKG GOOD FAITH SAID HE WOULD INSTRUCT KAERI PRESIDENT YOON TO HAVE COMPLETELY OPEN DISCUSSION ON FACILITY AND PLANS. IT WAS AGREED THAT ERDA TOKYO SCIREP WHO ACCOMPANIED ME ON THIS MEETING WOULD HAVE FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION

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WITH YOON ON SEPT 30.

8. COMMENT: BALL IS NOW IN KOREAN COURT, BUT AT THIS STAGE WE WOULD JUDGE KOREAN POSITION AS FIRM. KEY FACTOR IS PRESIDENTIAL DECISION MADE AFTER OUR FIRST APPROACH TO GO AHEAD WITH FRENCH RESEARCH FACILITY IN EXPECTATION THAT EXPLANATIONS PROVIDED US AND PROPOSAL FOR UNILATERAL US SAFEGUARDS WOULD BE SATISFACTORY. WHILE KOREANS MAY BE TESTING US POSITION, AT THIS POINT ONLY PRESIDENT PARK CAN REVERSE KOREAN DECISION TO PURCHASE FRENCH REPROCESSING FACILITY. NAM AND LHO, EVEN MORE CLEARLY, OBVIOUSLY DID NOT RELISH GOING BACK TO PRESIDENT PARK ON THIS ISSUE. WE WILL ENGAGE IN FURTHER TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS WITH KAERI AND TAKE FURTHER SOUNDINGS. BUT I PLAN NO HIGH LEVEL APPROACHES HERE UNLESS INSTRUCTED, AND WILL AWAIT CONSIDERED ROKG RESPONSE.

9. A CRITICAL ISSUE FOR ROKG IS CLEARLY ELEMENT OF TRUST, MADE EXPLICIT BY CHOE. WHILE I HAVE MADE EVERY EFFORT TO REBUT THIS ARGUMENT, PARTICULARLY THROUGH REFERENCE TO SECRETARY'S STATEMENT AT THE UNGA, DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT BETWEEN JAPAN AND ROK CLEARLY STICKS IN KOREA'S CRAW. IF WE ARE PREPARED TO EXERT MAXIMUM LEVERAGE, WHICH GOES BEYOND LOSS OF KORI II LOAN, IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH PRESIDENT PARK, IT IS MY JUDGMENT THAT ROKG WILL IN THE END MOST GRUDGINGLY CANCEL FRENCH CONTRACT FOR REPROCESSING FACILITY BUT PERSUASION SHORT OF THIS HAS AS YET BORNE LITTLE FRUIT.

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